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SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER MEETS WITH CORE FOUR AMBASSADORS

REF: A. (A) PAP 1517

1B. (B)PAP 1510

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Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson, reason 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) At our request, Haitian Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis (MPL) met with the Brazilian, Canadian, French and U.S. Ambassadors, as well as UNSRSG Hedi Annabi, on October 27. The PM acknowledged that she has yet to satisfactorily organize her office, and remains very much a prisoner of her schedule; these meetings will help her structure her contacts with the international community to better effect. This session addressed issues relating to judicial reform, prisons, a rumored cabinet change pushed by the president, hurricane reconstruction, the long delayed senatorial elections, and her thoughts on a donors conference and coordination. Although very welcoming, the PM is clearly burdened by the many issues on her agenda. End Summary.

12. (C) At our request, Haitian Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis (MPL) met with the Brazilian, Canadian, French and U.S. Ambassadors, as well as UNSRSG Hedi Annabi, on October 27. This meeting, we hope, will be the first in a series of biweekly encounters with the new PM. The PM welcomed the initiative and agreed that we would structure our discussions around priority issues, including elections, donor coordination, and reconstruction efforts. We also hope to highlight critical donor programs, including justice, police reform, good governance and health, on a rotating basis. The PM acknowledged that she has yet to satisfactorily organize her office, and remains very much a prisoner of her schedule; these meetings will help her structure her contacts with the international community to better effect.

13. (C) Justice Reform. The Core 4 stressed the need for quick action on justice and penitentiary reform. Given the press of Prime Ministerial business, we suggested that a quick decision on a new Justice Minister would be very welcome. MPL agreed, saying that she had told President Preval that she could not longer carry the Justice portfolio. She announced that Preval would soon name Jean Joseph Exume, former Minister of Justice under Preval I, to the position again. She is, she noted, very comfortable with the decision. Former Minister of Justice Rene Magloire will remain engaged on 3 critical judicial issues: drugs, money laundering, and tracking financial assets of the Duvaliers and "the gentleman from South Africa." Furthermore, he has asked to explore the

re-establishment of the moribund pre-trial detention commission.

¶4. (C) Prison Reform. The Prime Minister said that she had visited all three Port-au-Prince prisons during the weekend and said that she was "sickened" by what she saw. The conditions were "unimaginable and shameful"; no Haitian should be expected to live in such an environment.

Pierre-Louis pledged that she would make prison reform a top priority of her government and welcomed assistance from the US and Canada to improve conditions. We agreed to provide her with briefings on our efforts underway as soon as possible.

¶5. (C) Rumored Cabinet Reshuffle. Pierre-Louis said that she had had a "very frank talk" with President Preval, telling him that a Cabinet reshuffle at this point, as he proposed, was unacceptable. Clearly unhappy by the President's desire to drop Foreign Minister Alrich who was, she pointed out, her only choice in the cabinet, the PM said that there will no changes. She did not indicate how long she believes she can stave off Preval's meddling in the Cabinet, but indicated that the two had exchanged strong words on the subject.

¶6. (C) Senatorial Elections. Pierre-Louis expressed frustration with the Provisional Electoral Council (CEP), suggesting that it is more interested in perks than moving towards elections. She has now held two meetings with the CEP and the members continue to insist that they are handicapped by a lack of resources. They continue to tell her that it will take 120 days from the point of finishing preparations to hold the elections, suggesting that the election will not be held before June, 2009. (Note. Subsequent to this meeting, the CEP publicly announced April 19 as the date for the elections. End Note.) She acknowledged that holding the

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election is problematic in the wake of the summer's destructive storms, particularly in the city of Gonaives. The GOH estimates that 200,000 or so voters have lost their paperwork and other identification documents as a result of the storms and will need to be accommodated.

¶7. (C) Gonaives and other reconstruction efforts. Pierre-Louis agreed that the relief effort in Gonaives has slowed, due in large part to a lack of coordination and poor local and governmental organization. (As an aside, she noted that UNDP Rep Joel Boutroue believes that the work and coordination in the city is working very well, which was certainly not our impression from our visit there last week.)

The President and PM will call together major players, both in the government and the private sector and will name a special coordinator to exercise greater control over the process later in the week. Pierre-Louis expressed great concern about growing reports that assistance is being diverted to politicians in Gonaives, noting that three recent arrests have been made in such instances, and asked donor assistance in verifying these reports.

¶8. (C) Coordination Efforts and Proposed Donors Meeting. Stressing that "leadership must come from us", Pierre-Louis pressed strongly for improved donor/GOH coordination. She recognizes, she said, that the GOH has a long way to go in its oversight and engagement of programs. It has often not been able to do what needs to be done. But the donors too bear a certain responsibility to get it right and she urged that we "re-articulate" a global vision of Haiti's future together. To her mind, the appropriate vehicle is the DSNCPR, the Strategy Document on Growth and Poverty Reduction documents, prepared by her predecessor's government. It is critical, Pierre Louis stated, to address the issue of coordination within this framework in a rational, straightforward manner. She is eager to move forward with a donors conference, most likely towards the end of January, 2009 and before the February Carnival. A final decision on the date will be made within the week, she pledged.

¶9. (C) Comment. Pierre-Louis's offer to hold this meeting every two weeks is a welcome one; we hope that she holds to it, although it is clear that she is heavily burdened. As her comments indicate, the PM is finding her early days in office challenging. And Rene Preval is bird-dogging her every move. Her inability, as of yet, to organize an office which could support her effectively is an additional handicap that we hope she will address shortly. That being said, Pierre-Louis' intentions, as she indicates here, are all for the good. Now she has to deliver, always a challenge in Haiti.

SANDERSON